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Tracing Gothic in Children's Literature:

A Study of

Denial Handler's *The Bad Beginning*

from *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

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Dedication

To the memory of my father

Mother, a short dedication or even a long one won't be enough to reward you.

My Sisters and specially my sister BLOOM thank you for being with me whenever I need you

Djamila thank you for being my friend

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Abstract

The present study aims at tracing the Gothic narrative elements as they appear in children's fiction. Furthermore, it examines the role of combining children's literature with Gothicism. This dissertation introduces an example from the post-modern literature which provides evidence of this trend; the first novel *The Bad Beginning* from a series entitled A *Series of Unfortunate Events* by Daniel Handler, Daniel Handler's novel was published in 1999. The study will approach Snicket's novel from an analytical perspective in addition the study relies on postmodernism theory. The present study finds that Gothic elements are incorporated in the novel carefully to suit the child reader. Handler has provided a wide range of narrative strategies that incorporate Gothicism into his fiction. Thus; he integrates between Comic and Gothic to mitigate the effects of Gothic on the child reader. Moreover; this integration between the most terrifying elements and comedy helps in the development of children's literature as a genre. Most importantly, this combination helps in illuminating the positive effects on the child reader. As result; this study finds that this fusion provides a healthy stimulus for the child reader. Additionally, this integration helps the child to learn how to manage intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts.

Key words: Children's literature, Gothic literature, Postmodernism Gothic, Collective characters, Comic Gothic.

Table of Content

General Introduction

There exists an innate within human beings to fear the unknown. This impulse runs deep to cast the light upon the darkness. Since the origins of mankind, human beings have always had a continuous obsession with the dark, and all the things that lurk within the shadows. Humans have not had to just fear the external darkness but also their repressed darkness and that may explain why culture and literature have been so deeply influenced by the evil side of "the darkness".

For centuries it has been well represented in literature, from early Gothic novels like Bram Stoker's *Dracula.* Thus, Mankind truly has a manic fascination with the dark, and this why Gothic literature has been able to exceed time and become one of the most firming and celebrating literary genres. Furthermore, Gothic is a bridge between the past, the present, and even the future.

As we know every story has a begging, so does every storytelling genre, Gothic fiction is no exception. Horace Walpole's work, a short novel entitled *The Castle of Otranto,* It said to be the begging of Gothic fiction. Yet, the notion that Gothic is difficult to define as a literary genre has become commonplace, especially when it is used in integration with other genres.

"Children" is one of those words that seem familiar at first, but when one tries to delimit the category to which it applied; one discovers a whole new galaxy flourishing of meaning. But one cannot deny that children are innocent beings; childhood is characterized by innocence, pureness, and happiness. Also, it is considered an important stage in the individual's life. Since literature is a reflection of real-life there was a point when those innocent creatures deserved a literature for their own; many writers attempt to write for a particular audience and Children's literature' authors write for and about children, they create literature that can fit the children's

intellectual changes and meets their passion for adventures, and their tendencies to learn everything new.

The Most important is that Children's literature expresses the children's hopes, expectations, dreams, adventures, and even their fears. Many writers discuss children's fears and present them through Gothic literature in short stories and novels, it is no secret that Gothic literature with its mysteries and darkness can successfully express those fears.

Gothic and children's literature are, at first sight, not the most likely literary partners; the bloodthirsty figures, dark deeds bone by night are not the most obvious reading material for innocent and impressionable children. And yet this unlikely relationship finds its way in literature's world and there was a great interest in this relation. Writers continue to evoke Gothic's impressions and parallel them to their children's fiction. In accordance, one may ask these questions: Can Gothic elements affect negatively the child reader? If yes, what can authors do to manage those effects and to transform them into positive ones?

To examine these hypotheses, the present study will take Daniel Handler's *The Bad Beginning* from a series entitled *A Series of Unfortunate Events* as a sample. Since the case of study contains the blending of Gothic in children's literature and more specifically the core of this study is about the integration of two contradictory genres

A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning is a novel by Lemony Snicket, the novel first was published in 1999, it is Lemony Snicket's first book. The novel tells the story of three orphans (the Baudelaires) who move to live with their uncle Count Olaf and after that event, the children's life passes through a series of a Gothic adventure characterized by Count Olaf's efforts in getting Baudelaire's fortune.

This thesis will approach Daniel Handler's *The Bad Beginning* from an analytical perspective since the thesis will seek to find out the different Gothic parameters and investigate the role behind blending Gothic in the case study. Moreover, the study will use the postmodernism theory because the case study is a postmodern work. In addition, the work will apply other approaches when needed such as psychoanalytical approach.

This study is divided into three chapters, the first one is a theoretical and it will focus on the key elements of the topic; i.e. Gothic and children's literature identify them and tracing their development and investigating the relation between them. The second chapter will be mainly about the author and the novel and most importantly will highlight Snicket's representation of children and childhood. Finally, the third chapter will reveal the Gothic parameters in the case study; furthermore, it will shed light on the impact of such assimilation on the child reader.

Chapter one: A window to Gothic and Children's Literature

Introduction

The most important question at the begging of writing any literary work is not what you will write, but who your audience is? Or to whom this literature is addressed? No one can deny the fact that the audience is the most prominent factor which determines what literature is about. Most postmodernist writers have particularized their interest to new kinds of readers, which were ignoring for a long time in their writing.

At the late of the twentieth century, the face of the genre that created different positive stories about young heroes was changed; emerging authors such as Susan Cooper, Philip Pullman, and Lemony Snicket allowed the postmodernist literature definition to be expanded. They challenged their readers on an emotional level; they made them put their lives into perspective as children.

The present chapter is theoretical will focus on the key elements of the topic of the study. The chapter is divided into three main sections as the following: the first one is about answering the question of what is postmodernism. The second is about answering these questions: what is children's literature about? What are their origins? The third section will deal with Gothic literature, its origins, and its development. And the last section is about the integration of Gothic in Children's literature.

1. Postmodernism

Postmodernism is related with the historic and contextual reference and the evolution of western capitalism postmodern socially, economically, politically, and culturally; Postmodernism came as a backlash to structural linguistics, Western and central statements that refer to hegemony, domination, exploitation, and alienation. Also, Postmodernism had been addressed to impair Western philosophy, of capitalist institutional control over the world. Postmodernism theory has swept across all the disciplines, such as literature, criticism, art, philosophy, and education, and the rest of humanities and knowledge.

In general, there are four perspectives consist of the framework of postmodernism, Philosophical perspective believes Postmodernism is the result of the vacuum of disappears of modernity itself. The historical perspective sees the postmodern as a runaway from modernity movement, or of a rejection of some aspects; the political-ideological perspective that considers the postmodern erosion of the illusions of Western ideology. Finally, the Strategic perspective believes that there is open and multiple reading in the texts of Postmodernism not a single reading and it does not comply with methodological standards (Abdulazim 2).

Just like any other cultural phenomena and theories, the theory of Postmodernism has pros and cons. The upside of Postmodernism is in itself as the liberation movement sought to break down the world of illusions and myths and free man from the domination of mythology. Philosophies of Postmodernism are also working to build new values through undermining the central arguments of Western thought, also Postmodernism believed in, diversity and well-cared intertextuality, Gender, and ethnicity. It was so touched to the language of fragmentation, and disorder. Also, it disapproves of the concepts of oppression and authority of the power.

However, the most significant cons of the Postmodern is reliance on the idea of destruction and disorder, it does not offer a realistic and logical alternative to human culture due to the characters of the anarchist, nihilist, and absurd. Postmodern theory can be considered a theory that undermines itself and has gained the attention of both positive and negative criticism. Thus, we find that the philosophy of Postmodernism has positive and negative values (Abdulazim 4).

1.2 .Pioneers of postmodern theory

1.2 .a. Jean Baudrillard:

Baudrillard is a French philosopher who believed that there is no clear meaning but there are absent meanings. Thus, he was against the idea of the distinction between the appearances and the facts behind these appearances. He created a set of concepts such as the floating truth, and unreal. In addition, in his works "Simulacra and Simulation." Baudrillard explained that the real world is made up of floating concepts   (Carter 12).

1.2. b. Jean-Francois Lyotard (1924-1998):

Lyotard can be considered the father of postmodernism, Lyotard's work entitled the postmodern condition: A Report of knowledge is the most significant theoretical expression of postmodernism in philosophy. Lyotard argues that knowledge cannot claim to be offering truth in any absolute sense; it depends on the tricks of language that are always relevant to specific contexts also he argued that the postmodernist writers emphasize in their narrative on new forms of knowledge that were ignored before like as immigrants and women who are excluded groups (Carter 12).

1.2 .C. Jacques Derrida:

Derrida is a French philosopher, also is one of the most important philosophers of Postmodernism, was interested, in exposing the dominant Western institutions, and the white mythology based on supremacy and the abuse, colonialism, and alienation. Jacques Derrida has criticized Western metaphysics, which is associated with attendance and the language and voice signifier (Carter 13).

1.2 .d. Michel Foucault:

Foucault is a French thinker who was against post-structuralism, also he is one of the pioneers of Postmodernism, and he was interested in the concept of discourse and power and strength. He believed that all the authority of society is expressed in the speech. Furthermore; in his book "The Discourse of Language" he illustrated that there is a strong and close relationship between knowledge and power. Foucault believes that the discourse system declared the reality of the world also believes that there is a close relationship between knowledge and power and also he was associated closely with defending the freedom of the self (Carter 13).

1.3 .Foundations of Postmodernism

Postmodernism in the Western culture based on a set of foundations, so it could be identified in the following principles and elements:

1.3. a. Criticism of the Previous Theories:

Postmodernism has sought to break down the moral authority of the major intellectual formats, and to critique the theoretical schemes in order to understand the nature of this development which usually take the form of ideologies. Thus, this means new form of experience and politics. As Lyotard agree that these previous theories are misleading explanation

of the social world and it cannot develop true and meaningful knowledge of this world. Furthermore, the aim of these theories is to exclude, rather than include.

1.3. b. Dualistic Criticism of the Analysis in the Humanities:

Postmodernism calls for the abolition of self-modernism while modernism aimed to meet between the two "self and subject". It attempts to create a cancellation of self-modernism. Postmodernism emphasizes differences over similarities

1.3 .c. The New Visions of the Concepts of History, Time and Place:

Postmodernism formed special new ideas about history, time, and place, regarding history as an independent discipline, postmodernism seeks to minimize the importance of history, and it sees his role more than being only a witness to what is happening and to record the facts, But it regards history as an independent discipline (Abdulazim 3).

1.3 .d. There is no Absolute Truth:

The ideas of Postmodernism are characterized by the rejection of everything that was dominant on the Modernism stage and it considers that the pursuit of the absolute truth is a human error perpetrated in the course of scientific and practical goal, and the basic idea of postmodernism is that there is no way to reach the truth (Abdulazim 3).

1.3 .e. The Rejection of the Idea of Representation:

Postmodernism rejects all kinds of representation, and if there are representations of the social knowledge, it is difficult to understand them as Baudrillard refers to the difficulties of the separation between social reality and its representations. and the fundamental problem of that is the inability to represent the other, due to the differences between the humans being and their thoughts and ideas as well (Berlin 92).

1.4 .Characteristics of Postmodern Writing

Postmodernism was born in a world that had just hardly made it out of two World Wars and where the field of literature was fairly traumatized and looking for safety in new forms of experimentation. Thus, it developed the most disparate styles and techniques. Critics like Ihab Hassan had begun to set some of the characteristics of what we now know as postmodernism. They argued that the work of postmodernists was intentionally less unified, unpredictable narration, more playful, more interested with the processes of our understanding than with the pleasures of artistic finish or unity, and doesn't tend to hold a narrative together.

1.4. a. Irony, Playfulness, Black Humor

These became the hallmarks of their style. Postmodern authors are very disappointed by World War II, the Cold War, conspiracy theories. They try to merge all these events in their narrative indirectly so, irony, playfulness, black humor comes. Some authors like John Barth, William Gaddis, are some of those authors whose first used black humor before they became identified as postmodernist (Hutcheon 20).

1.4 .b. Intertexuality

Intertextuality is a word developed by Julia Kristeva; this term illustrates the communicative relation between one text and the other. The acknowledgment of previous literary works is an important element of postmodernism and that what served intertextuality. It is the drafting of texts' meanings by other texts. It can include an author's borrowing, a reader's referencing of one text in reading

Critics point to this as the lack of originality in postmodern works. Intertextuality in postmodern literature can be a reference or correspond to another literary work, a protracted discussion of a work, and an adoption's style of the other work (Prayer 78).

1.4 .C. Temporal Distortion

Fragmentation and non-linear narratives are the main features in modern as well as postmodern literature. Temporal distortion in postmodern fiction is used in different ways and most of the time for the sake of irony. In this literary technique, the author may jump forwards or backward in time (Sharma & Chaudhary 53).

Focusing on postmodern literature and the reflection of Gothic literature, the integration of these two movements is inevitable. Postmodern literature's standard can be seen as experimental, radical, and often metafictional literature. By defining the genre, Gothic-postmodernism links a tie between Gothic and the postmodern in literary and cultural terms and it announces Gothic as the clearest mode of terror's expression in post-modernity; Gothic postmodernism provides an expression of the psychological and philosophical consequences of terror in postmodernist literature with the comparison to the terror of early Gothic works. Maria Beville in *Gothic-Postmodernism, Voicing Terrors of Post-modernity* (2009), defines Gothic postmodernism as: "and amplification of the Gothic language of terror to encompass the more recent terrors of our postmodern" (9).

Gothic and postmodernism have come to be twined into a new mode of writing, its fascination with horror. Thus, through the terror of Gothic –postmodernist texts, we can question our unconscious, fears, and believes or sending different messages about human choices and actions that led humanity to suffer (q.td. in Beville 17). Spooner claims that: "Gothic may be a

set of discourse that thrives on revival. In the context of post-modernity this process has been short-circuited and the Gothic now simply reveals the vacuum at the heart of modern culture" (10).

2. Gothic Literature: A General Overview

First of all; the delineation of Gothic literature is particularly difficult, having different referents in areas and different periods. Thus, the Gothic's notion does not apply only to literature. Yet, it has historical and social dimensions. The Germanic tribe "the Goths" is considered the origin of the term Gothic; this tribe played a significant role in the fourth century in the desultoriness of the Roman Empire (Stevens 8).

Socially speaking, the term has been seen as ambiguous from its very begging, because the term Gothic is often difficult to be defined. Michael Gamer has argued that: "As Gothic no longer is what it once was, we must stop trying to define it as having a static identity, but by confining it to a particular temporal and spatial locus, some ambiguity can be averted" (10). In other words, if we try to define Gothic in relation to particular periods rather than see it as indefinable this may remove some ambiguity.

First of all, during the eighteenth century, by the Enlightenment it was the point one the Gothic movement was in its higher levels. However, the views during this period were based upon rationality. Yet, there was a great interest in the individual's feelings. Consequently; Gothic literature depicts fictional plots with different supernatural elements. These plots expressed a welcome deviation to the rational beliefs of the Enlightenment. However; each one of the Enlightenment and Gothic fiction is complemented each other admirably. Since the audience

could escape into a fictional world full of horror adventures where both the soul and mind are satisfied (Stevens 10).

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the term Gothic was the most credible. Gothic specialist David Punter stated that: "Gothic is a word which has, ever now, a wide variety of meanings, and which had has in the past evermore, It is used in a number of different fields" (1). As Punter adds, when we talk about Gothic literature we often refer to "a group of novels written between the 1700s and the 1820s" by authors like Matthew Lewis, Horace Walpole, Charles Robert Maturin, and Ann Radcliffe (1). since these novels highlighted a set of characteristics: " an focuses on portraying the terrifying, insistence on ancient settings, the visible presence of supernatural also the presence of highly stereotypical views and characters without forgetting the perfect using of literary suspense techniques" (1). Punter adds that the term "Gothic" is presently used in historical romance novels such as Joyce Carol Oates's fiction and in horror fiction itself for example the works by M.R. James (2, 3).

The first novel by Walpole *The Castle of Otranto* which first appeared on Christmas Eve in 1764, This novel mainly based on two prefaces, the first one is published in 1764 under the title *The Castle of Otranto* while the second is edited in 1765 as *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic story* had brought with it the critical interest of Gothic (Davison 45).

Maggie Kilgour argues in *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* that: "Walpole's Gothic novel was an attempt to blend two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern" (3). Thus, by doing that he creates a fusion between the modern and the ancient romance. Since The modern romance focuses on imitation nature while the ancient raises the imagination and fantastic plot. That's to say the ancient romance is about bringing the imagination of the medieval age while

the latter tries to define a new mood of writing when nature is always intended to be. Moreover, M.H Abrams in his glossary entitled *A Glossary of Literary Terms;* tries to define the Gothic prose in regards to Horace Walpole's work *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (1764), "The Gothic novel, Gothic romance is a type of prose fiction which was inaugurated by Horace Walpole's work *The Castle of Otranto: a gothic story (1764)*" (qtd. in Koppensteiner 15).

Abraham recognizes how Walpole's work has helped in revealing and defining the Gothic Genre, he also Points out a set of Gothic characteristics and he emphasizes that the setting is one of the most important Gothic's characteristics. Furthermore, Abrams adds that the Gothic narrative usually takes place in an ancient castle in the medieval periods where the story's events turned around a villain oppressed an innocent hero. Additionally, Gothic literature shows a passion for the past and more precisely for the medieval age. This might explain why the first Gothic novel had a medieval setting.

Elisabeth MacAndrews wrote in *Gothic Tradition in Fiction in 1979:* "Gothic Fiction is literary of the nightmare" (3). MacAndrews got to the heart of the Gothic genre with this statement. Since Gothic texts deal with our dark fears that we strive to hide and bury in our sub-consciousness, these fears must have been a dominant factor in people's life. This fact has been analyzed by Jessica Bomarito as the following: "The Gothic worlds depicted fears about what might happen, what could wrong, and what could be lost. In Gothic narratives, writers were able to express the anxiety". In other words, Human life is full of choices as well as fears, most of the time humans fear and think about all things that have happened in the past or will happen in the future, there is always a continuous fear. Hence, psychology has a prominent role in shaping the new genre 'Gothic'. Thus, the psychological knowledge of the human mind is the basis of the supernatural and fictional plots in Gothic fiction as well as the portrayal of good and evil. As

result, the characters and settings are the same and they were used over and over by Gothic authors, especially in the nineteenth century.

As already mentioned Gothic is a genre that has seeped into all literary movements including postmodernism. Postmodernism as an experimental science tries to examine reality. This reality can be received in the use of supernatural phenomena such as specters and other things, so postmodernism aims to establish fiction and fantasy over reality. More specifically, Gothic-postmodernism can be seen or understood as an independent genre by its self-consciousness and it is clear that the term Gothic-postmodernism functions to fulfill the expression of post- modernity's horror and darkness.

3. Children's Literature: Origins and Development

Broadly speaking, according to many different researchers' perspectives, the definition of children's literature can be divided into four primary currents. First, there is the notion that children's literature made from a set of texts with notable shared characteristics such as simplicity of the style, didactic themes, and an optimistic tone (McDowell 19). Second, it has also been claimed that any things children happen to read can be applied to the term "children's literature" (Zipes 11). Third the term "children's literature" has been also considered a commercial brand that has little to do with what children read (Zipes 11). And, finally, children's literature has been given this definition as adult activities based on adult thoughts of what children need (Nodelman 8). There is a surprising degree of truth in the four definitions, which partly overlap and partly supplement one another.

The first challenge to define children's literature is how unusual a category it is, as the name implies children's literature is defined in relation to children as an audience and as a

subject of interest of the literary production. Several critics have indicated the problems of defining children's literature with its audience. For example, Jack Zipes claims that "children's literature does not exist, if we take the genitive case literary" (39).

Also according to Zipes if childhood and children are taking as social constructs in this sense literature is imaginary. In other words, in reality, children do not have literature for their own, they do not even produce it, and most of the time they do not choose what they read and even when they do, their choices remain limited to adult's choices. On the other hand, Zipes stresses that " if a student of Ph.D.in the field of children's literature in a department of English at a university, He or she faces reading more books produces for young readers than any young person will ever read" (74).

 The biggest issue with categorizing children's literature by its audience is that children may not be the only target audience for this literature. Because the actual reader of what known as children's literature may be teachers, scholars, and librarians. Therefore, Zipes suggests that children's literature is "all the different kinds of texts that we help produce, promote and disseminate and to which children are exposed" (58). It means that children's literature includes cartoons, dolls, and comic books. Nevertheless, Zipes himself later recognizes that "this is not the children's literature we commonly assume when we use the expression" (58).

On the other hand, John Rowe Townsend describes children's literature as "the only practical definition of children's books today –absurd as it sounds- is' a book which appears in children's list of publisher "(10). In other words, Children's literature is the result of an age of development that has affected the different social, economic, and cultural aspects of the European continent and this has affected children by becoming interested in the commercial

label for adults. Townsend by his assertion confirms that books make up children's literature are not chosen by young readers but adults. Yet, this does not mean that the attempt to define children's literature should be abandoned. However, it should be the point start to reach more precise definitions.

It difficult to define a category based on its audience, it is equally so to propose a comprehensive definition that includes all texts which are considered as children's literature, simply by emphasizing key elements as recurrent themes and other textual features. Andrew McMurry in his "Children's Literature: A Rhetorical Analysis" affirms: "children's literature is a genre with various interesting and rhetorical techniques seeking to entertain children and educate them about the fundamental in life" (3). That is to say, it is genre aims to educate and to entertain children about themselves and different aspects of life with its effective techniques.

Myles McDowell introduces another definition by comparing children's literature and adult's literature "children's books are shorter, they tend to be optimistic rather than a passive treatment, with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; child protagonists are the rule; children's books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive" (54). Most children's books indeed have these characteristics, although they do not mean necessary elements of children's literature. For one thing, the idea that children's books are shorter has been recently contradicted by the publication of Daniel Handler's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* with thirteen books. On the other hand, saying that dialogue and incident are preferential over description and introspection may as well apply to Agatha Christie's novels as to children's book, moreover, the presence of child protagonists is not restrictive to children's literature either, since there are

children's stories that characterize older protagonist like marriageable princesses and princes. The same applied to the optimistic tone which can found in many genres that are aimed at an adult readership, such as romantic comedy (qtd. in Pons).

On the other hand, Nodlman states that "children's literature is written by adults and that it is what it is because of how it addressed its audience, because of what adults believe children are" (151). It means that children's literature raises its audience based upon adult views of childhood however it cannot undermine that the characteristics emphasized by McDowell are there because they fit adult perceptions of childhood and children.

Children's literature since it is produced by adults, certainly it describes childhood in a way that satisfies adult's desires for innocent, and this may have nothing to do with how children see their childhood and themselves, it seems that children's literature is an adult's attempt to depict childhood from both their perspective when they were children and their perspective as they are older. It can provide the need of children's story and adult's nostalgic feeling as Peter Hunt's stated: "Children's literature, like any literature, bears examining from the point of view of adult readers. Even its child-directed projects reflect adult writer's intentions and satisfy adult reader's notion about children's tastes and need" (Pons 119).

Undeniably that children fiction portrays child characters that conform to adult norms, morality, ethics, and social acceptance in what appears to be an attempt to educate and socialize child readers by getting them to determine with those characters, even though, the idea that children identifying with these characters are also assumption and my not always be true. Yet, it cannot be neglected that children's writers also write for the purpose of entertain children and teach them.

In the light of the above, it seems that the most useful definition of children's literature for this dissertation is as Nodelman states "children's literature tends simultaneously to celebrate and denigrate both childhood desire and adults knowledge" (181).

Concerning the development of this literature; a group of factors has formed and affected this process such as the political and social contexts. As Zohar Shavit, claims: "children's literature is developed initially on the trace of the adult's literature" (q.td.in O'Sullivan). According to Shavit the development process of children's literature is taking the same steps as that of adults' literature.

Moreover, Gillian Adams in his work entitled "Ancient and Medieval children's text" Adams attempts to trace the development of the new field of children's literature at the same time historicize and contextualize it. According to him the development of this literature is dated back to the ancient civilizations the world ever knew. These civilizations experienced the evolution of children's literature as it is associated with the reading and writing experiences. Adams has tackled the study of the field in terms of a series of questions about the nature of the children's books (qtd. in Zalani 14).

The first process of writing has been long established in the Mesopotamian civilization mainly were associated with commerce and had begun as Clay tables, one can date back to the very first literary documentations from Sumer around 2400BC during which some of the texts were dealt with children, the educational texts for children mainly were shifted from the adult composition (Adams 227).

Moving to another ancient civilization, the Egyptian civilization around (1545-1085 BC) witnessed a kind of prosperity that has affected the whole aspect of life and sectors, especially art

and literature. There were two stages only for the Egyptian ancient schooling; the first one is for children and the second one for the postgraduates (Adams 227-228). One of the major works in the history of children's literature entitled: *Instruction of Khety* had delivered from the Egyptian civilization (Adams 231).

Greek is another civilization in which children's literature is captured over its literature, before the age of seven years the Greek schooling was not necessary and it was only for boys. Different kinds of literature stories, legends, fables, and myths about superheroes or animals were introduced to children at earlier ages. Yet, schooling and mainly theater encountered children more with direct performances. (Adams 232).

The Victorian period 1800s_1900s, not an exception, this was the golden age for children's literature. At this period children's literature was not for educational purposes only, but it was found also for pleasing the child reader. However; children's literature didn't gain the interest of several writers who later shifted their interest to it as an exciting field and witnessed the growth among the pieces of literature of the world (McMurry 6).

Arriving at postmodernism, children's literature during this period has received more attention from writers and readers as well, both children and adults. In addition children's books with postmodern influence defer from the traditional books. Postmodern children's literature is described as non-linear with different stories and an ambiguous plot that sometimes invites the reader to be the author. The work of David Macaulay *"Black and White"* is an example where the reader has the options for creating the narrative. Other narrative innovations are manifested by spatial planes used in illustrations (Clegg 25). Two other traits found in postmodern children's books, satire, and ambiguity, are features that leave questions in the reader's mind one

of the best examples is John Sciezka's work *the Stinky Cheese Man, and other fairly stupid Tales*. Thus, post-modern tales set their stories in a darker atmosphere unlike the traditional fairy tales (Rouby 18). Postmodernist children's literature is also characterized by mixing different genres and elements; one of the best examples is Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Clegg 25).

Considering the historical associations that the term 'Gothic' has assumed yet. It continues to develop; moreover, it is blended to other genres despite that they may seem contradictory in moods as innocent, comic, and pure.

4. Gothic in Children's Literature:

Many people believe that Gothic in children's literature is a new trend as a result of contemporary trends. However, since the dawn of time Gothic has been part of children's literature more precisely in the eighteenth century, in the Victorian period.

Children's literature developed once people realized that children need literature for their own in addition that the majority of adult's books were, in most cases, not suitable for youngsters. Thus, it is impossible to deny that Gothic as popular genre in adult fiction has influenced Gothic in children's literature. However, Gothic in adult literature has been analyzed by literary critics for a period ago while the critical attention has hardly been paid so far to Gothic in children's literary, which it seems to be mainstream these days since the term presents some problems when it applies to works of children's literature. According to Roderick McGillis, children's literature and Gothic fiction are different in tones and moods: "In Gothic, children may die and innocent may fall, tainted by infection growing from a bad seed. The

Gothic is not, at least traditionally, a cherry genre, the Gothic world is decidedly not a pleasant place; it ambiguous at best, it is not safe. Gothic is the opposite of pastoral" (qtd. in Pons 14).

On the other hand, Nodelman agrees to such a perspective and he characterized children's literature as "hopeful and optimistic in tone" (qtd.in Pons 15). Also, McGillis points out another key difference: "we might think of children's literature as a literature that promotes a positive social behavior and growth while Gothic promotes fragmentation and dissolution" (227). However, their contributions are not convincing ones since it cannot say that Gothic is necessary pessimistic and promoting dissolution only. While children's literature is always optimistic and is didactic what is good for children, as far as, some Gothic's works may end in an optimistic tone while some children's literature may represent tragic events like death and failure. As Jack Zipes states in the introduction of *The Gothic in children's literature: Haunting the borders:*

> Walk into any children's bookstore and you will note a decidedly Gothic flavor to many titles on display. From creepy picture books to Harry Potter to Lemony Snicket to the Spider wick Chronicles to countless vampire series of young adult readers, fear or the pretense of fear has become a dominant mode of enjoyment in literature for young people. (Zipes 1)

Gothic in children's literature is mainly for didactic purposes unlike in adult literature. Hence, children are supposed to learn about the evil and the dangers of the world, one can often find a protagonist is purely good and his counterpart is only evil. Thus, for that purpose Gothic in children's literature does not consider a sub-genre to Gothic in adult literature. However, especially between 1764 and 1830, there were nursery rhymes full of all kinds of terrifying and

horrible events, these nursery rhymes are also called " the haunted nurseries" (Townshend 15). The themes of these nurseries, usually, were monsters or witches threatening children's safety near to their familiar places like schools, homes, and stores. As it has already mentioned before, the purpose of Gothic characters is not to scare children but, to raise the awareness of children that the strangers could be dangerous (Koppensteiner 48).

The end of the twentieth country has been the golden age for Gothic's children literature; it has been the cornerstone to the genre's revival. Writers of the period use different Gothic elements in new ways to portray children's adventures and to depict childhood from a different perspective such as the famous 20th century series by Enid Blyton: *The Famous Five3* (1941). Their main common point is that the children fight for what is true to them and go on adventures but this is only a temporary solution to recover what is rightfully theirs (Koppensteine)

Conclusion

Gothic literature is a nebulous entity, yet it developed in the second half of the eighteenth century. The first Gothic novel is considered to be *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole. Moreover, two concepts are important to Gothic literature: evil and good. In any Gothic story, there is a presence of these two notions since the good is always against evil. This presence is based on psychological concept back to the eighteenth, hence; that supposed to mean the person is purely evil or purely good there is no between. In addition, Gothic has seeped into all literary movements as postmodernism.

Children's literature as the term indicates is literature aimed at children. However; it is difficult to relate the definition of the category by its audience since adults as well may read this literature. Thus, it will be more comprehensive to set a group of characteristics to this literature such as the optimistic tone and the didactic purpose.

Gothic was finding into children's narrative, as this had always been the case, even that some authors do not simply see it as an appropriate connection, but the audience demand for Gothic is been taken into account. It is likely no accident that these works reflect the actions and behavior of maturation like independence, wisdom, and courage. Part of Gothic is not just to put oneself in a fantastic scenario of horror, yet to depict oneself as a person responsible and capable of resolving terrible situations. At the same time they seek to preserve their goodness, a great example of that is Lemony Snicket's work, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. However, how is that possible without the child being negatively affected? In the next chapters, this study will focus on this specific tension between Gothic elements and children's.

Chapter Two: *A Series of Unfortunate Events*: An Overview of *The Bad Beginning*

Introduction

Fiction reflects its target audience, also it shapes that audience. In postmodern literature, Handler is one of the major figures, he is known for his multi-audience since his works are for all age children and adults. Handler creates in his series *A Series of Unfortunate Events* a world or it can say a Gothic landscape for his children characters. Despite the variety of Gothic spaces in Snicket's series yet, they all stand on the same idea which is the fact that the children figures are alone in this Gothic adventure while all the adult characters do not care. Moreover, Looking at the techniques of postmodern literature as breaking down the traditional idea of childhood and changing the symbolic power of the children, it can notice how often the children figure hold adult's feelings and emotions also how they have the ability to understand several events around them. In examining childhood, it is inescapable to include novels and series, since they have played such an important role in the development and the recovery of childhood ideas, and how children are used them to learn different ways to cope with their surroundings.

This chapter will argue that Snicket as a children's author finds in childhood something suited to his fiction. The present chapter will be divided into three main sections; the first one is about the author of the series i.e. Handler's biography. The second chapter will present a summary of the case study *the Bad Beginning* from *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. While the emphasis in the third section will be on the major characteristics of children's Gothic fiction. The last section will deal with the different visions of childhood and children present by Snicket in his novel *The Bad Beginning*, moreover, this section will highlight the fundamental question of this research paper.

1. Daniel Handler's Biography

   In an interview, Todd Leopold has introduced Handler in the following way: "And behind the mysterious Snicket is one Daniel Handler, 32, a fiendishly clever author with a taste for Victorian gothic settings" (qtd. in Pons 323).

   Daniel Handler was born on February 28th, 1970 in San Francisco, California. He is an American writer and musician as well, he has won the Poets Prize in 1990 from the Academy of the American Poets, after that he started writing poetry. Later on, he has turned his interest toward another type of fiction. Handler is best known for the variety of his audience since he has written for both adults as well as children mainly. However, his children's book *A Series of Unfortunate Events* is considered his masterpiece which is published in 1999-2006, as millions of copies are sold around the world. This work brought Handler's name success and fame in literature's world (Zalani 22).

   Handler also has written other works such as *The Basic Eight* (1998), *Watch Your Mouth* (2000), *Why We Broke Up* (2011) which has won the Michael J. Printz Honor. Handler is best known by Lemony Snicket is the pseudonym of Handler. Snicket is the narrator of *A Series of Unfortunate Event* and other works of Handler like *Horseradish: Bitter Truths You Can Avoid* (2007), *The Compromiser Is Dead (2009) The Dark* (2013). In an interview with Handler, he claims that his pen name is originated when he has written his *The Basic Eight* (1998); as he has used it as a cover name to address the Wing organization in the series. Moreover, Handler has published a book entitled *Lemony Snicket: The Unauthorized Autobiography* (2002). It is a fictional autobiography that is devoted to Lemony Snicket himself. (zalani 23)

According to Lauren Turner Lemony Snicket is more than just a pen name that uses by the author Handler, however; it is the "pseudo persona" of Daniel Handler himself (6) (qtd. in Pons) .so he is the author and the narrator of the series in a way or another. Handler throughout the series has provided ground for his readers to know who Lemony Snicket, as it is cited in the first book of the series is identified by the following statement: "Lemony Snicket was born in a small town where the inhabitants were suspicious and prone to riot, He now lives in the city, during his spare time, he gathers evidence and is considered something of an expert by leading authorities" (*The Bad Beginning*). Furthermore, in his letter to his publishers, he declares: "Remember, you are my last hope that the tales of the Baudelaire orphans can finally be told to the general public" (*The Bad Beginning*) (qtd. in Zalani 24).

2.1. Summary of *The Bad Beginning*

The Bad Beginning from *A Series of Unfortunate Events* is a children's novel that has no happy beginning or happy ending. The story starts at Briny Beach where the family was together, the narrator introduces the three siblings as the oldest daughter Violet, who is fourteen years old, she has also great knowledge of engineers and she is considered an inventor. Klaus the middle boy in the Baudelaire family, he is twelve years old, Klaus is intelligent and he is a book reader. Finally the baby Sunny she speaks just a few words. The Baudelaire's children are extremely unlucky since the happy days of the three children ended and their misfortune begin when Ms. Poe said: "Your parents have perished in a terrible fire" (*The Bad Beginning* 8).

The children lost their parents in a massive wildfire, of course, what happened to the children's parents hurt them and made them in a miserable situation moreover they lost the home they belong to. As consequence the three Orphans move to Ms. Poe's house until he finds a

home for them .but, they were not welcome in Ms. Poe's house. As the following passage explains; "Mrs. Poe purchased clothing for the orphans that was in grotesque colors, and itched" (13). for that, he decided to take them to live with one of their relatives who called Count Olaf yet, they don't know before; Ms. Poe said: "you'll be used to your surroundings, and this Count Olaf is the only relative who lives within the urban limits" (15).

The children's tragedy starts mainly when they come to the house of their legal guardian, Count Olaf's house. Even though the house is large but its owner Count Olaf is an evil man. He mistreated them, for example, he gives them one room with one bed to share it in sleep. Moreover, he makes each day a special list of instructions, one instruction is to prepare dinner for Count Olaf, and he does everything to make them suffer. However, the only solution that the three Orphans have to escape from their uncle Count Olaf is to ask Ms. Poe for help. Unfortunately, Ms. Poe answer is as the following: "Now that you are in his care, the Count may raise you using any methods he sees fit. Understand?"(65)

Consequently, Count Olaf turns to be more gentile after a call from Ms. Poe about the children's complaints. After that; he makes a fake play entitled The *Marvelous Marriage*, the children feel suspicion about this play since he insists that Violet plays the pride's role as he plays the role of the groom as he states that: "You are going to play the young woman I marry" (76). Of course, he plans to be a real marriage, and he kidnaps the youngest girl "Sunny" to threaten her sister and forces her to marry him. Violet cannot refuse this marriage and she obeys what Count Olaf wants to save her little sister whatever the cost. After long thinking, Violet is able to find a trick. Despite that Count Olaf's fake play has successfully run; the real lawyer in the play Justice Strauss stated that the marriage is illegal because Violet signed the marriage's document with her left hand. Finally, Sunny is saved from Count Olaf and Violet does not

become his wife. The Baudelaires siblings retune to live with Ms. Poe until he finds another relative for them while Count Olaf escapes the punishment and he is still outside preparing more plans to control The Baudelaire's fortune. Eventually, the siblings must accept the fact that they cannot leave peacefully because of Count Olaf.

2. Major Characteristics of Children's Gothic Literature

2.1. Fictional Series

'Series' is a term that refers to a group of works focusing on a single, author, genre, or character and it publishes separately often over a considerable period of time. It developed in the nineteenth century in North America when James Cooper's *the pioneers* was published in 1823 (Taipale 20).

Despite the success and popularity "series" has achieved among child readers, the majority of critics have seen "series" as poorly written, mass-produced, and belonging to low culture. However, there was a group of critics who concentrate on the process of reading itself rather than the content. Fictional Series is a developmental stage that young readers go through and most importantly it is a bridge that brings the child closer to the process of reading so that the children are encouraged to read (Russell 22-23).

Both Nikolajeva and Russell claim that many critics have generalized that all formulaic fictional series are recurrent and to have no room for creativity or diversity and imagination. Russell, however, argues that Lemony Snicket has the ability to break these misconceptions concerning series fiction, Russell states that: "difference is found in the content of the narratives rather than the style of the series" (Russell 24). Lemony Snicket's series is set up in a distinct pattern regardless that the series is a formula story; every book in the series is not

similar to the other one. That means the series offers a big significant shift in terms of story and character development. Moreover, Kimball argues that the *Series of Unfortunate Events* differs from the traditional and stereotyped manner that has found in children's literature. The Baudelaires children are confronted with different kinds of horrible adventures that characterized by Gothic events and experiences. Even though, they remain as kind and good-hearted as at the beginning of the series (Taipale 22).

Fictional Series can be divided into two types, the progressive and the successive; the progressive series is a series in which the events of the story complete each other, and each book tells a different part of a sequential narrative. Thus, the events are in continuous development as well as the characters grow to be older and more mature. However, the novels in this type of series have their place. They should be read in the same order to get the whole idea also to understand the escalation of the events well and the psycho's changes of the characters. The books in the progress series are separates from each other, for the role of giving the reader and the writer breathing space for representing the development of character, the Harry Potter series belongs to this category (Hunt 532).

On the other hand, the successive series is one in which the development and maturity of the characters are not the primary concern. Thus, the characters show a few signs of growth in the age, but they show and build a satisfactory experience grows through the dramatic moments between them. Hence, the whole series is held tougher by themes such as camping, friendship, and family; also the books of this type can be read in any order because none of the books relies on the other or in its place in the sequence, for example, the work of the Reverend W. Awdry, *the Thomas the Tank Engine* is a successive series (Hunt 533).

The key element to understanding the appeal of series fiction is to appreciate the endings, by reading any complete Gothic series from the first book to the last one, there is a sense of intimacy that grows incrementally with the main characters, and what is distinctive about these characters is that they are orphans.

2.2. Orphan Characters

In a fiction that aimed at children the use of the orphan's characters, especially as protagonists, is very popular since the orphans' characters originate from folktales. According to Kimball Orphan protagonists are used a lot in children's Gothic literature because they represent the other; they are isolated and lonely also they are separated from the rest of society, due to the fact that they do not have a family or a home. Thus, they do not belong anywhere, they have to work hard to find and create their place in the world. The orphans are, in many ways, sad characters because of their loneliness and isolation, Even though they fascinate the child readers particularly for these reasons (Kimball 559). For example, in *The Series of Unfortunate Events,* the whole series is mainly a narrative of the three isolated orphans trying to find a home and someone to care for them.

Furthermore, stories with orphans protagonists usually have a happy end, this gives the readers the impression of comfort and optimism and it creates the notion of there is nothing impossible if the lonely orphans manage to survive, everybody can do the same. Kimball explains why orphans characters have been popular in children's Gothic literature and claims: "It is because the orphan so deeply represents the feelings and pain of us all that the character continues to exist in children's literature. And until the day when none of us feels the pain of isolation, orphans will continue to symbolize it for us." (qtd. in Taipale). Of course, there are evil characters in these stories but in most stories, the split between good and evil is not as clear,

there is always space for ambiguity. In *A Series of Unfortunate Events,* Count Olaf is seems to be evil; he is violent, drunk, and greedy.

However; the other adults in the series are not visibly either evil or good. The best example is, Mr. Poe does not wish anything bad to the orphans and he tries to keep them safe, but eventually, he is not doing his best to make the Baudelaire children happy, because he just does not care enough about them; Mr. Poe is interested and too busy with his work. Thus, he looks more concerned about keeping the Baudelaire fortune safe more than helping the children themselves. The orphans are also usually mistreated, either verbally or physically. According to Kimball, the villain keeps an eye on the orphan because they have something he wants (Taipale, 16, 20). As a result, they are mistreated either verbally or physically and, in the worst cases, the villain wants the orphan dead. Furthermore, it is a common feature in children's Gothic literature that the orphans have a guardian or a helper to assist the children orphans. However; if this guardian is one of their relatives thus the orphans will be abused by one of them, female or male; for example, Harry Potter is mistreated by his aunt Petunia. And The Baudelaires, also are mistreated by their uncle Count Olaf who even plans to kill them many times. Thus, the use of orphans reinforced the image of pure childhood.

Count Olaf seems to be orally and physically abusive since he threatens to murder the orphans to get their inheritance and force them to work hard. Yet, the orphans have to find away to get through these obstacles. it is highly common that the protagonists are assisted by supernatural forces, magical humans, or creatures. The three children defeat the evil as a team; their relationships help them to build what is known as the collective characters.

2.3. The Collective Characters

According to Nikolajeva, collective characters are "a group of characters who seem to be equally important in the narrative who can equally lay claim to being the sole protagonist" (8). The term "collective characters" means as Nikolajeva explains; in a novel, the collective characters or collective protagonists represent more than one main character. However, they have the same role, and they form a collective protagonist. She continues by stating that they have even different actors but they form one act (Taipale 22).

Nikolajeva furthermore adds: "the collective character is one of the specific narrative features of children's Gothic literature" (qtd. in Taipale 23). In other words, the use of the collective characters as a narrative device is unusual and almost exclusively used in children's Gothic literature because it is hard to use this narrative device in adult literature. Edith Nesbit is the first children's writer to use the collective character in his novels such as the five children series (1906) and other works (Taipale 23).

In *The Bad Beginning*, the Baudelaires children don't seem like individual characters. However; they emphasize teamwork, and they all unique as individuals with special skills in the same time their importance in the story is equally. They share the same function and one big goal, which is to survive in Count Olaf's world by taking care of each other and revealing his plans of stealing their fortune. Furthermore, the three children can be said to form collective characters because each of them, Klaus, Sunny, and Violet have different personalities with different skills, each child has its skills. Yet no one of them is superior then the others, for example the three Baudelaire are so brilliant. The three children highlight the importance of necessity and cooperation by celebrating the uniqueness of each one of them so the emphasis is

putting on how these skills are important to the teamwork, also being together is what gives them power.

In addition, the easiest way to attract more readers is to use the collective protagonists, it means to use characters from both genders male and female because boys are interested to read books with male protagonists, in the other hand, girls prefer reading books with female protagonists as Nikolajeva claims "supply a subject position for readers of both genders and different ages" (qtd. in Pons 325). Besides, the collective characters can also be used in introducing main characters of different ages as brothers and sisters. Thus, the authors represent these relationships between the siblings as they are in the real life.

In the case of *The Bad Beginning*, the collective characters are three siblings from both genders also of different ages, for that the series is attractive to all children. Yet, not even gender or age make a difference since none of the children has more a prominent role than the others. For example, sometimes Klaus saves the day with his skills, and in other cases, Violet or Sunny takes this responsibility.

As the story moves on, what empowers the Baudelaire Orphans to face the bad events and even to face the villain is their responsibility toward each other and they're existing together in a form of a team; in other words, the whole represents the one and without doubt, the one represents the whole this is what knows as the collective characters. Thus in *The Bad Beginning,* this unified and coherent psycho that the child represents, it looks like a representation Snicket's visions of childhood and children.

3. The Representation of Children and Childhood in *The Bad Beginning*

3.1. The Ideal Vision of Children

The ideal vision of the children from many perspectives point view is characterized by self-reliance, empathy, responsibility, controlling anger, and lack of thinking about life concerns. In *The Bad Beginning*, Snicket creates an idyllic childhood since the three Orphans are well educated and very responsible. Although; in many scenes we see Snicket's child characters turning in their beds and worrying about their future. So the ideal vision of the child in Snicket's narration is not depicted as a stage of life without any preoccupations or confusing feelings (qtd. in Pons 305)

However; childhood seems to be idyllic in the sense that it used to depict a time and period when the child and childhood are symbolic of innocent and not yet corrupted. As rose claims: "the figure of a child represents an ultimate beginning where everything is perfect or at least good" (qtd. in Pons 305). Thus, as the story moves on, the children appear with high morals such as intelligence, love, and kindness. In addition, Snicket with his narration does not glorify childishness and innocence. However; his intention through these ideal children seems like emphasizing maturity and experience .since the children are well educated and they able to make choice and most importantly they are responsible and mature.

"Who will help us?'" Violet asked. "'Who will take care of us?"

"We will take care of ourselves", Klaus said (*the Bad Beginning*22).

In Snicket's novel, the children reject everything related to the villain for that they choose responsibility and duty over self-satisfaction, intelligence over violence, and love over hate. Yet, most of the time they do not make the right decision as Snicket claims: "sometimes doing the

right things is impossible, and then you must do something else" (38). They even in some cases perceived as villains because they committed crimes but it was self-defense's crimes. As Klaus said: "everyone either that we are freaks murders' 'Sometimes even I think so" (55). This notion of children who make crimes and choose to do the wrong things breaks the traditionally ideal vision of children.

On the other hand, money is brought in most contemporary children's fiction as preoccupation and motivation for child characters, laying the idea that children have to be safeguard by money. Yet, *The Bad Beginning* is somehow an exception, the Baudelaire children do not take money as motivation and they don't consider it one of their most important concerns, since throughout the whole series the Baudelaire Orphans work many times in different jobs but they were never paid with money but by other things, as an example, they were paid with chewing gum, and sometimes they not paid at all. Also, the adult in the series know that children should not work but they didn't do anything in this concern. Thus, it looks that money is the main concern of all the adult figures in the series in a way or another especially Count Olaf.

Thus, lemony Snicket's representation of the child in *The Bad Beginning* is idealistic in a special way that fits the unreliable narration. The Baudelaires are morally upright also they create a view of incorruptible children at the same time they represent the children as individuals with preoccupations in their mind. Also Snicket depict the three children with certain ability that helps them to face the real world. The ideal vision created by Handler seems to be a door to more Gothic as well as to a dark vision of childhood.

3.2. The Dark Vision of Childhood

The world presented in *The Bad Beginning* is far away from the traditional concepts of innocent and experience. Handler/Snicket in his novel creates a world where all these traditional concepts have been turned upside down. Snicket's children figures are not allowed to live their childhood or to be children anymore, because the adult characters are not interested in playing their role as the protector of those children. The adult characters in Snicket's novel have things more important than taking care of the weak, however; they have other priorities such as money and personal satisfaction as this dialogue exemplifies.

"Sometimes a few people die in fires or get eaten by lions, if it's all for the greater good" said Count Olaf.

"What's the greater good" asked Colette.

"Money and personal satisfaction" answer Count Olaf (58).

It seems that Baudelaire's parents are the only adult characters who are described positively. Yet, they are dead so they cannot provide the protection the children need. Hence, one of the hard truths that children have to know is that their parents are not always there to save them as might think. As Violet said: "I wish they were here, they would never let us stay in this dreadful place" (*the Bad Beginning* 32).

Although some of Handler's adult characters want to keep children away from the wrong concepts and false knowledge. At the same time, they do not disturb their selves to protect the children from evil. The best example is this dialogue between Ms. Poe and Klaus, Violet

"It was an emergency" Violet said calmly, "so I picked the lock."

Mr. Poe: "nice girls should not know how to do such things" (168).

The characterization of children in Snicket's world is contrary to the classical ideas of weak and dependent children. From the very beginning, the children's age is stated by Snicket; Klaus and Violet are fourteen and twelve and Sunny is a baby. It seems that the children are represented as mentally and morally mature for that age thus, they are not childish, and they are also portrayed as talented. For example, Snicket shows Violet's superiority in engineering knowledge but at the same time maintains her childish innocent when it comes to sexuality; since Snicket never describes a romantic exchange between Violet and the other kid that she met several times. Thus, the Baudelaire protagonists are children whose deplorable conditions oblige them to become adults but they are trying to preserve their innocence in this dark childhood.

In the Gothic atmosphere of *The Bad Beginning,* the children have to learn how to become older in order to survive and protect each other. In contrast to the real adults in the novel, they look immature. As Ann Scott argues in her study American Childhood, that in post-American fiction the adult characters lose their role as mature, and on the other hand children figures are presented as mature, so there was a shift in the relationship between children and adults.

Snicket's child characters are completely in an adult world where the adult figures helpless and cannot offer any protection or knowledge. They are all present as unworthy and misfit moreover any relationships with adults end with disappointment every time because everyone from the adult figures refuses to take care of them. Additionally; the idealized vision of the relationship between children and adults seems to be absent.

In *The Bad Beginning*, the childhood vision looks dark from the very beginning; Snicket breaks the traditional sense of happiness with his warning in the first pages: "I'm sorry to say that the book you are holding in your hands is extremely unpleasant. It tells an unhappy tale about three very unlucky children. Even though they are charming and clever, the Baudelaire siblings lead lives filled with misery and woe." (*The Bad Beginning 1*) Besides, the three Baudelaires do not have a home, throughout the whole series they live in different houses. In childhood, this perception is what scares and terrifying children the most.

Additionally, horror is highly traced in the flow of events. The death of the children's parents considers the first moment of terror which lets the children in a difficult psychological situation: "It is useless for me to describe to you how terrible Violet, Klaus, and even Sunny felt in the time that followed. If you have ever lost someone very important to you, then you already know how it feels, and if you haven't, you cannot possibly imagine it" (11)

Furthermore, following their loss, the children meet Count Olaf. And the first example of horror when the children are inside the car with Count Olaf: "Count Olaf's face grew very red. For a moment he said nothing. Then, in one sudden movement, he reached down and struck Klaus across the face" (15). Then they move to live in his house where everything is a representation of horror. The house of Count Olaf consists of a forbidden tower, also there is a significant presence of the same image of an eye all over the house: on the doors, on the walls, on the bed sheet, the tower is decorated with it and it does not stop here even the Count has a tattoo of this weird eye in his ankle all "that Count Olaf had an image of an eye tattooed on his ankle, matching the eye on his front door. They wondered how many other eyes were in Count Olaf's house, and whether, for the rest of their lives, they would always feel as though Count Olaf were watching them even when he wasn't nearby"(5). Thus, everything in Count's house

gives Gothic impressions and several questions arose what the eye represents? What is hiding in the forbidding tower? Does Count Olaf watch the children with this weird eye? Moreover, he always says terrifying things to the children: "this is my knife very sharp and eager to hurt you, almost as eager as I am, if you don't do what I say, you will suffer bodily harm" (94). Thus, the narrator looks to use the curiosity of children against them, since he uses it to portray a dark childhood.

This dark representation of childhood leads us to question the effects of using Gothic in children's literature. Through focusing on the Gothic stories and the internal feelings of children, there are interesting concerns are expressed by the adults; these concerns are about using Gothic in children's literature and his effects.

Children, Gothic, and parents are three words, yet different concepts with a continuous relationship. Parents are seeing Gothic as an adult genre, some parents believe that Gothic stories are too scary for children, and for them, this kind of story will be misguided and without any doubt will send the children directly to the mental institutions. Moreover; they believe that finding Gothic in children's literature subverts the didacticism's role of children's literature in the growth and development of the child reader. Certainly, the Gothic journey that a child will carry out is so terrifying. Thus, for most adults children's literature should be a suitable material for children at the same time. they believe that children should be hidden from Gothicism because children might be highly emotional that Gothic psychological influences will affect them negatively in the long run. Although, the one should not forget that the different Gothic elements that creep between the pages are adults' creations.

On the other hand, Children love the fantastic world created by the Gothic. Since all children have a desire to be heroic and to reveal secrets. They want to feel hints of horror lurking around; children read different scary stories that including monsters, witches, vampires even though, they want them to be real to give them a feeling of shivers as the hairs on the back of their necks stand up.

Thus, childhood is not just a stepping stage to adolescence, then to adulthood and it is not something to be waved away, it cannot be held in the memory drawer. Childhood is part of something bigger, Childhood is always there in the shadows, creeping into our memories whenever it has a chance, and it affects us throughout our lives and our future decisions.

It is interesting, though, that adults locked this secret door and throw the key in the darkness out of the door in an attempt to save children. Yet questions arose, in the real world, children face different crises like the death of someone they love so should not adults allow children to experience similar crises through the gloomy path of Gothicism? And if childhood is a journey, then Gothicism is just one road among others, and children should be allowed to travel and explore. Thus, if the children never passed through the dark how they can appreciate the light? And the significant question is how Handler was able to mitigate the effects of Gothic on the child reader?

Conclusion

This chapter examines the major characteristic of children's Gothic literature as the series fiction, literary orphans, and collective characters. It shows that most children's Gothic stories are in form of series since it is their favorite type of fiction.

In addition, there are two types of series the progressive and successive; the progressive series is a series in which the events of the story complete each other and each book tells a different part of a sequential narrative, While the books in the successive series of this type can be read in any order because none of the books relies on the other or in its place in the sequence.

The second major element of children's Gothic literature is the literary orphan. Hence, every Gothic story contains orphans protagonist because they are considered the suitable material for the Gothic atmosphere as well as to the children's sympathy. Several authors use, in a way or another, the literary orphans in their fiction to depict the miserable life of those children. The third and most important element of children's Gothic literature is the collective characters as Snicket uses this kind of characters, the collective characters might be from different ages and gender however they function as one character because they have an equal role in the story.

The third section deals with how Daniel Handler changed the representation of children and childhood by creating different visions. First of all, he represents an ideal vision of the children and shows that children are human beings as well. They might be independent and might have various things to think about them, and most importantly they might have a preoccupation more than the adults themselves. Moreover, this ideal vision portrays children as mature and responsible. Since Handler's novel is a Gothic one, he chooses to depict the dark side

of childhood by focusing on children's fears, through using different Gothic elements such as horror which appears almost throughout the novel. This chapter highlights an important question to be answering in the next chapter which is about Handler's style in mitigating the Gothic effects on the child reader.

Chapter Three: Tracing Gothic Elements in Lemony Snicket's *The Bad Beginning*

Introduction

From ancient to modern history, the Gothic diversities of innovation and characterization of the events are of the great matter for many writers thus literary texts. And *the Bad Begging* from *a Series of Unfortunate Events which* portrays a post-modern vision is not an exception; As Daniel Handler is famous for his playful style, and his skillful application of Gothic devices. Snicket/ Handler has broken some of the past conventions of children's literature by blending Gothic elements within it. However, at the same time he is concerned about the kind of impact it might be on the child reader, thus Handler uses Gothic in combination with another genre that seems to be the most commonly used in literature that aimed to children.

This chapter will try to list the most important Gothic elements in children's literature more specifically in my case study *The Bad Beginning.* In the first section, the analysis will start with the cover and the back of the book *'The bad Beginning'.* In the second section, the focus will be on the narrative techniques and how Snicket used his unique and different techniques to keep the reader interest while the third section will deal with the various Gothic devices on the plot. The fourth section will be devoted to the main villain in the novel Count Olaf and highlighting his Gothic characteristics. The last section will be the answer to the following question: in which way does Handler mitigate the effects of Gothic on the child reader?

1. The Cover and the back of the Book

The most significant and attractive element in any book for children is the cover rather than the title since pictures are more attractive for them. Furthermore, the cover is usually the first source that shows the basic context of the Gothic story. Thus, even without having read the book, and without diving deeper into the book just by one single look at the cover of the book. Besides, even one does not have much knowledge about what "Gothic" is, one could probably assume that this is Gothic.

In the cover of the first book *the Bad Beginning*, which is illustrated by Brett Helquist, there are the three children standing miserably in the debris of what has represented their happy life. One can notice Violet with an unkempt hair holding her baby sister Sunny by her hands in the storm while the smoke is still ascending from what is left from their house, which was destroyed by unexpected fire; Klaus is touching a wood from the rubble with a sad face. All this gives us the idea that the Orphans are left alone in this dramatic turn. Furthermore, the storm and the disheveled look represent the unstable emotional state of the three children. What makes the first look of the book more Gothic is the combination between the illustration and Snicket's quote "Dear Reader**,** I'm sorry to say that the book you are holding in your hands is extremely unpleasant. It tells an unhappy tale about three very unlucky children" (Snicket).

Thus, the cover seems to fulfill the purpose of Gothic literature since it arouses the reader's empathy and sympathy about the three children so immediately the reader feels sorry for them. Additionally, there is the first sentence on the back of the book which is written with capital letters: "PLEASE READSOMETHING ELSE - Lemony Snicket," obviously that any writer wants to reach as many readers as he can, therefore why Snicket writes this warning? Is he ashamed of his novel? Once again it seems that there a hidden purpose behind his warning. Thus,

he simply wants to raise the curiosity in the reader because any reader will think as the following "why should I not read this novel?" Of course, any reader will continue reading to satisfy some morbid curiosity.

Typically, the cover of any book highlights the novel's plot and its main characters to give the reader useful information about the story. However; *The Bad Beginning* is quite the contrary since Snicket puts his warning on the cover as a hook for the reader to expect more danger and unfortunate events on the next pages. Any house has a door so does any story has a cover that arouses the reader's curiosity to discover what's inside the book, that to mean the Gothic narrative techniques of the story.

2. Gothic Narrative Techniques

In Lemony Snicket's novel not only the cover and the title play an important role in expressing the Gothic atmosphere, but also the narrative techniques has a great role since they reinforce the events of the story . *The Bad Beginning* is written in a way that the reader gets the impression as if an adult is telling the story louder since Snicket ruins the traditional storytelling and puts the reader and the author face to face, by this unique story telling. The author is addressing the readers directly; he also puts them at the same level as the characters. As this passage shows:

> It is useless for me to describe to you how terrible Violet, Klaus, and even Sunny felt in the time that followed. If you have ever lost someone very important to you, then you already know how it feels, and if you haven't, you cannot possibly imagine it. For the Baudelaire children, it was of course especially terrible because they had lost

both their parents at the same time, and for several days they felt so miserable they

could scarcely get out of bed.(11)

By this, Snicket explains to his audience how the situation of anyone loses someone who once meant so much to him is so miserable; and his protagonists are not an exception. Thus, the emotions, behaviors, and struggles of the three children become more comprehensible for the audience when they relate it to similar events that happen to them in the real life, but it does not stop at this point. Snicket constantly is prying into the narration by commenting on the events and digressing into unrelated topics, also he uses digression to speak to the reader and guess what he might think or wondering. Moreover; Snicket is a narrator who likes to interrupt the narration whenever he has an opportunity to give the reader some information about his ongoing situation; where he is? What he has to do?

In addition to that, through Snicket's writing style, his language seems full of horror, seriousness and whimsy. Hence, he seems to be able to use the language in a skillful way to build his particular world. Since he believes that words have a variety of meanings, not just one stander meaning and these meanings can ironically fit the different situations and. A clear example of that is when he describes the rickety trolley which the Baudelaire always takes with them when they visit Briny Beach: "the word "rickety," you probably know, here means "unsteady" or "likely to collapse" (123).

However; he changes the explanations and the meanings of the words to fit the situations for example, when Mr. Poe finds a relative for the children to leave with him. He looks happy to get them out of his house, so briskly he tells them to be ready as soon as possible to leave. Directly the narrator starts explaining the word: "the word "briskly" here means "quickly, so as

to get the Baudelaire children to leave the house" (125). Snicket uses this explanation to suit the situation of Mr. Poe and to represent his happiness.

Thus, Lemony Snicket uses everyday language and simple vocabulary to make understanding easier for young readers. However; if he uses any difficult expression Snicket promptly explains it. For example this quote:

> It is very useful when one is young, to learn the difference between "literally" and "figuratively." If something happens literally, it actually happens; if something happens figuratively, it *feels like* its happening. If you are literally jumping for joy, for instance, it means you are leaping in the air because you are very happy. If you are figuratively jumping for joy, it means you are so happy that you could jump for joy, but are saving your energy for other matters. (59)

Another aspect of Gothic narrative techniques uses in *The Bad Beginning* is the regular warning of Snicket about reading or having this book as he notices at the beginning "If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book" (1). Also at the end of the novel, he puts a final warning and probably confirmation to the readers that no happy ending is to come:

> At this point in the story, I feel obliged to interrupt and give you one last warning. As I said at the very beginning, the book you are holding in your hands does not have a happy ending. It may appear now that Count Olaf will go to jail and the three Baudelaire youngsters will live happily ever after with Justice Strauss, but it is not so. If you like, you may shut the book this instant and not read the unhappy ending that is to follow. (137)

Another Gothic feature of the writing style is the unreliable narration; Snicket is not just the narrator but an author and a character in the story as well. Moreover; in an interview with Cross, Snicket answered the question of why he chose to write an unhappy beginning, he justified his choice by his desire to write such events due to the fact that the happy events are not popular to use in literature while the terrible events have "long tradition on literature" (25). He makes it clear from the first pages what and why he is telling such a story

> In this short book alone, the three youngsters encounter a greedy and repulsive villain, itchy clothing, and a disastrous fire, a plot to steal their fortune, and cold porridge for breakfast. It is my sad duty to write down these unpleasant tales, but there is nothing stopping you from putting this book down at once and reading something happy, if you prefer that sort of thing. (1)

Lemony Snicket is a narrator who loves playing with words; he uses language in different ways to express the Gothic world that he created for his characters. Yet, the words in the vacuum space cannot complement the whole effect of Gothic, it needs a plot.

4. The Gothic Plot

The plot is of great significance that supports the novels' world, yet what makes this plot alive is the narrator style. Thus, the plot of *The Bad Beginning* is full of ambiguity and Gothic devices.

First of all, the mystery is one of the Gothic elements which Handler uses in his plot, something that can apply to the whole story since Baudelaire's children are searching for the cause behind their parents' death. Additionally, in *The Bad Beginning*, we find the element of mystery is presented, from the first scene where the children are on the beach and it keeps

appearing in all the events of the story; the three orphans are so curious this aspect serves the development of the plot, they are hunted by the search for the secret behind the eye which they find in all over the house of Count Olaf. As this quote indicates: "Count Olaf had an image of an eye tattooed on his ankle, matching the eye on his front door they wondered how many other eyes were in Count Olaf's house, and whether, for the rest of their lives" (*The Bad Beginning* 25)

Another feature that Snicket applies to express Gothic is the isolation of the protagonists, Sunny, Klaus, and Violet. The three children do not know a lot of people; their surroundings are relying on their parents and their relationship with each other. From the very beginning, Snicket shows that the children are isolated since they go to the beach alone. The narrator does not even make a clear presence to Baudelaire's parents, although, the parents should be the closest person to their children, and children are supposed to be observed by their parents. Moreover; even they have a relative they do not know as Count Olaf: "Violet said, 'why didn't our parents ever invite him over?' " (15)

In Count Olaf's house they spend most of their time alone since Olaf is not the most appropriate house's partner: "When the children woke up and chose their clothing out of the refrigerator box, they would walk into the kitchen and find a list of instructions left for them by Count Olaf, who would often not appear until nighttime" (30). Thus, Snicket's focus is on emphasizing the isolation of his protagonists because the mystery is walking feet by feet with isolation to serve the Gothic mood of the story.

Terror and uncanny are major elements that the narrator uses to develop the whole Gothic story of the Baudelaires, right from the beginning, while the children are at the beach enjoying a strange figure, suddenly, is moving towards them:

"Look at that", Klaus said, and pointed towards the figure. It was drawing closer, "What do you think it is?" Violet asked. "I don't know," Klaus said, squinting at it, "but it seems to be moving right toward us.""We're alone on the beach," Violet said, a little nervously. "There's nobody else it could be moving toward"(4-7).

This event draws the reader directly to the plot, the fact that the children are alone in the whole Gothic atmosphere, the cloudy and foggy weather, and the strange figure that is suddenly walking toward them raise a feeling of unease in the audience in addition, this sense of unease and uncanny are shared between the protagonists and the audience as well.

Even though the entire story is a kind of horror experience yet, there are two events in the story where terror is extremely clear. The first one is when the little Sunny is dangling from the window of the forbidden tower. It is a real moment when the audience and protagonist both feel extremely terror:

"Oh no," Klaus said in a small, scared voice, and Violet looked again. It *was* a birdcage, dangling from the tower window like a flag in the wind, but inside the birdcage she could see a small and frightened Sunny. She was utterly trapped. (105)

She pictured Sunny toppling from the tower and onto the ground, pictured her sister's last thoughts being ones of sheer terror. (107)

The second terrifying situation is concerning Violet when Count Olaf planned to marry her to take all the fortune:

Now, Violet let me ask you again: will you marry me?" Violet swallowed, and looked down at Count Olaf's tattoo. She could not bring herself to answer. "He

reached out a hand and stroked Violet's hair. "Would it be so terrible to be my bride, to live in my house for the rest of your life? You're such a lovely girl, after the marriage I wouldn't dispose of you like your brother and sister."

Violet imagined sleeping beside Count Olaf, and waking up each morning to look at this terrible man. She pictured wandering around the house, trying to avoid him all day, and cooking for his terrible friends at night, perhaps every night, for the rest of her life."(109)

Snicket get to heart of Gothic with these different horror events at the same time he addresses the reader to feel what the children are feeling, it is that feature on the plot that make it a Gothic one, its ability to raise terror at the highest level. Thus, it seems that the plot of *The Bad Beginning* is a long Gothic adventure and every event is followed by more Gothic events. However; any plot needs a setting where the events take place.

3. Time and Place

The setting of *The Bad Beginning* is somehow ambiguous since the novel takes place in an unknown city and the reader only knows that this city is small and it is not far from the beach, it is described by Snicket as a "dirty and busy city" (*The Bad Beginning* 2), the country is not given either. However, the time and the space of the novel seem to be referring to the twentieth century. Considering the signs of industrialization such as cars since Mr. Poe derives to Count Olaf's house and the walkie-talkie which is used by Count Olaf twice. Although, Snicket adds some aspects in his story that seem somehow old-fashioned for the twentieth-century readers.

There are two hints for the reader: first, the children are abused by the adults and they are obliged to work that to mean the physical violence against the children is not considered a crime.

Second, the marriage law, in the city, where the story takes place, says that after the wedding the fortune of the bride will immediately be transformed to her husband. Considering that *The Bad Beginning* by Lemony Snicket is a Gothic novel. Hence, it is not surprising that the narrator mentions or uses concepts unfamiliar to the readers. Yet, we must never forget that in literature to set a story in the past and to use unclear settings is part of Gothic traditions.

Furthermore, the weather plays an important role in expressing the Gothic mood in the story. since the weather is described at the very beginning at Briny Beach, where the Baudelaire children like to spend their time, as "gray and cloudy"(*The Bad Beginning 2*). This description is regarded as disturbing for the reader because usually there is an ideal image of the seaside which is the weather of the beach is always hot and sunny. However; the bad weather is a connotation of the Gothic's devices which evokes a weird feeling in the reader that something horrible is to come.

Additionally, the beach expresses double meaning. Primarily; the beach represents the feeling of happiness with family for most children. quite the contrary for the Baudelaire children since most of the time they go alone to the beach without their parents, as a result, there are no shared family moments for the Baudelaire children.

Another aspect of the Gothic setting is the main villain's house. It is a traditional Gothic place, with a gloomy appearance exterior and unwelcoming interior, filled with secret places of imprisonment such as passages and towers. Despite Count's house is "quite large" (24). Interestingly, Snicket chooses to describe only two rooms for the reader from the whole: the children's room and the kitchen. However; he once briefly mentions the dining room also the narrator uses the terms "inside the house and out the house" thus, it looks that the house does not

have a garden. This quote will show how Count Olaf's house is dark, dirty, and uncomfortable and the same applies to Baudelaire's room since it is so dirty and too small

> Count Olaf welcomes the children into his house: "The room in which they found themselves was the dirtiest they had ever seen, and a little bit of mud from outdoors wouldn't have made a bit of difference. Even by the dim light of the one bare light bulb that hung from the ceiling, the three children could see that everything in this room was filthy. (20)

On the other hand, the description of Justice Strauss's home strengthens the sense of mystique and uncertainty that is arisen in the reader since Justice Strauss's house is the opposite of Count's house "The Baudelaire children looked out and saw the prettiest house on the block. The bricks had been cleaned very well, and through the wide and open windows one could see an assortment of well-groomed plants" (17).

This description shows an ideal house with a beautiful guardian that includes different flowers with different colors even the house is colorful with many windows, therefore, the light goes in from everywhere, and also there is a big library that is to reflect Justice Strauss's education. As a consequence, it is not a surprise that Justice Strauss's house is described as wonderful and delightful since it reflects the persona's character traits.

According to MacAndrews the setting in the Gothic stories functions as additional information about the persona (qtd. in Pons 322). Hence, the dreadful house of Count Olaf refers to the Count's character. Besides, the missing information about the other rooms in the house helps in emphasizing the mystification of Count Olaf's character. All this description evokes in the reader vague questions about the personality Count Olaf .

At the end, to present the characters in a Gothic text the setting will be the most appropriate and helpful tool to serve this function. Therefore, the Gothic setting can narrowly be analyzed without considering the main characters. Thus, the giving information about the setting discloses other details about the persona.

5. Count Olaf's Gothic Features

The age of the character, appearance, dress code, eyes, and behaviors, shows his or her psychological dimension. Thus, the audience can understand and interpret the character in the story through the physical appearance, in specific where the character is mentioned how he looks like. Our character is Count Olaf is one of the main characters in *The Bad Beginning*; Count Olaf is a round character. First; Snicket describes Count Olaf as "very tall and very thin, dressed in a gray suit that had many stains on it" (22). from this physical appearance we can conclude that Count Olaf is a typical villain with a dirty and irresponsible appearance since he cannot even be responsible and take care of himself, and to explain that the narrator adds this description "his face was unshaven, and rather than two eyebrows, like most human being have, he had just one long one" (22).

Moreover, Count Olaf's traits and his outward appearance are much related, the first impression about him is mercenary man, and this is highlighted through Count Olaf's behaviors toward the Baudelaire children. He is not close to the children and he doesn't care about them or their tragic loss. The only thing he is thinking about is how to steal their fortune. On the contrary, he traits them as servants and commands them to do the most difficult housework, like cooking dinner for thirteen people. Even if the children do their best to make all things alright, Count Olaf never appreciates or seems to be satisfied with them.

Snicket adds an interesting feature to the classical tradition of the Gothic villain in representing Count Olaf, which is the vampirism concept. Through the represented picture of Count Olaf, the audience can get the idea that he is a vampire. Hence; Lemony Snicket plays skillfully with the concept of vampires, he leaves the reader with a confusing impression, is Count Olaf a vampire or not? Since he does not mention any evidence to confirm that he is a vampire at the same time he does not mention that he is not as well.

"Count Olaf", the character's name seems to be related to the vampires in many cases in Gothic literature vampires are represented as Counts. One of the famous and best examples is Bram Stoker's *Dracula* who is pictured as Count as well. Furthermore; the character is given only the first name "Olaf" which according to Nameberry means "the descendent of the distant ancestor" (Nameberry). This consolidates the possibility of being a vampire. On the one hand; the daily routine of Count Olaf such as eating and sleeping is not mentioned. Snicket uses this as a feature to misleading the reader about the nature of Olaf's character.

There is one scene when the process of eating is described by the narrator to the reader; however, this event is just to reveal Count Olaf's cupidity. In addition, there no clear information presented to the audience about his work. Does he have a job? Or where he is going all day? All what they know is that he is a Count and that he leaves the house very early and backs at midnight, also it seems that he has financial problems and that is very clear from the house's desolate conditions and his dirty clothes. Moreover, he goes to the forbidden tower regularly, so what he is doing in that tower?

All in all, these aspects of Count Olaf's life lead us to the typical characteristics of the Gothic villain and the vampire on the one hand. Since the existent of the protagonists is built upon the rejection of the villain's brutality thus the villain's existent is a necessity. Yet, if the existence of the villain in children's literature is necessity thus, making some changes, like adding comedy are another necessity to reduce the effects of this Gothic atmosphere.

6. Conquering Childhood Fears through Comic Gothic

The integration of comics and Gothic in children's fiction has been admitted by the critics interested in the interaction between Gothic and children's literature, as MacAndrews claims: "the revival of Gothic in children's fiction tends to make extensive use of the comic register" (qtd. in Pons 329). Comic Gothic as a new genre in children's fiction is characterized by mixing between elements of Gothic as well as Comic. Thus, the mixing of horror and humor cannot be ignored anymore, moreover; *The Bad Beginning* is the best example for this integration.

The Bad Beginning is a children's work of fiction that includes comic episodes even its end is closer to the comic ends. Snicket uses comedy in his novel not only to parody children's literature but also to deal with serious and real issues through black comedy. As mentioned before, Handler/Snicket presents in his novel a dark vision of childhood. This dark vision includes children's fears while most authors choose to portray children's fears through Gothicism only. Snicket adds a sense of humor to this Gothic; the unfortunate events that he narrates with all unrealistic elements which force the child characters to manage how to survive by different unbelievable plans; they seem to have a comic distancing effect as Horner and Zlisnik state: "The comic turn in the Gothic often indicates ambivalence in the face of the new"

(qtd. in Woodcock). The narrator describes the story of the three children as a terrible one, but the language that he uses produces more humorous effect than terrifying.

Humor is an essential and fundamental element in children's fiction since the children enjoy anything that makes them laugh. Snicket uses humor to mitigate the aggressive elements of the story; this integration seems to satisfy the children's needs. Thus, Snicket makes use of comedy to satisfy children's needs for humor at the same time he directs this humor to overcome childhood fears.

In *The Bad Beginning*, Count Olaf is the main villain and as mentioned in the previous section, he has the scariest characteristics ever. However; Snicket can minimize the effect of those terrifying characteristics since the ludicrousness of Count Olaf is stressed from his first appearance in the story. When Count Olaf opens the door to the children, Snicket describes his dirty appearance saying that he has one brown eye; also he is unshaven and has stains on his suit. Yet, after this description Count Olaf welcomes the children saying: "hello, my children .please step into your new home, and wipe your feet outside so no mud get indoors" (the Bad Beginning, 22). The fusion of Count Olaf's filthiness and his request creates an ironic effect, right from the very first moment he appears, Snicket tells the readers that the villain is not to be taken seriously. Hence, the children can feel the Gothic and comedy at the same time.

Even though, Count Olaf is revealed as someone who believes in scaring children to be more obey as he always says: "you cannot go easily with children" or "I am just disciplining these orphans, they must taught to obey their elders". Furthermore, he likes to abuse his power over the weak. With all this cruelty Snicket adds a degree of comedy to make Count Olaf appears ridiculous for example, he states: "aren't raspberries delicious?" he asked, "They were my

favorite berries when I was your age." Violet tried to picture Count Olaf as a youngster, but couldn't. His shiny eyes, bony hands, and shadowy smile all seemed to be things only adults possess" (*The Bad Beginning* 72). The villain seems ridiculous in some cases to offer the child reader space to revenge and fight him. Moreover; he has such humorous characteristic serve as a tool to free the children from the strong aggressive Gothic effects.

Thus, in a tragic story for children, comedy can be regarded as the appropriate participant to come out the child reader from the extensive tragic touches of melancholy, as Avril and Sue Zlosnik suggest : "Gothic's preoccupation with 'surface' that enables it so the embrace a comic as well as tragic perspective" (qtd. in Woodcock). It means that the integration of Comic Gothic creates a balance at the level of emotions. Moreover, Mitigating terrifying elements through using comedy in parallel with portraying the character dealing with them is a two-pronged way of shaking fear and putting pleasure within. By focusing on the positive contributions of fears that emerge from the world's harshness, the fusion of Comic Gothic seems to be the most appropriate integration to serve that purpose. Yet, it does not mean that children's fears are taking as something ridiculous.

In addition, this fusion has a positive effect on the child reader, through using the different Gothic elements in a combination with comedy help connect the child at the emotional level to the novel's characters and themes, this creates a spark of self- experience and self- reflection. Furthermore; Comic Gothic makes the child trusts his intuition of distinguishing between evil and good since he might see an evil character seems to be funny and absurd; also it creates mental impressions about the wrong and right things. Comic Gothic also gives the child the ability to interpret hidden knowledge, behaviors, actions, and appearances. What matters is that the combination between Comic and Gothic creates new pieces of knowledge, and it teaches

children that things are not always what they seem; it helps the child to progress through different psychological development stages.

At the beginning of any Gothic story, the child is outside the narration. Yet, with the ongoing of the story and through different comic episodes he becomes inside. In the engagement with narrative, he reveals always a hidden truth, Gothic often depicts fragmented truth, and therefore, it gives his reader a half-truth to encourage the child to figure out what is on the other side. Thus, those comic episodes help the child reader to take the positive effect of Gothic.

Through Comic Gothic, the child challenges his fears no matter what they are. Since what fears you masters you, the only way for the child to overcome those fears is to face them. Gothic's authors put the child face to face with his deepest fears such as monsters, ghosts, vampires, being alone, lost in the darkness and any kind of fear is whispering inside his head and turns him against himself. However; Snicket reduces those fears to the child by adding comedy. As a result, the child faces them through the experience of reading Comic Gothic. When the protagonist gets over the evil and defeats his individual fears and anxieties, so, the child reader gets over his fears as well. What makes the child relates to the characters in a Gothic story is the comic elements that attract the child reader. Thus, Comic Gothic elements serve as a link between the child and the satisfaction of self' desires to win. The fusion of Gothicism and comedy allows the children to realize they won't be shattered by their fears, instead, they will survive. Thus, these fears are fundamental to the children's growth and development.

Most Children appreciate the ends of Gothic stories, what sticks to the head of the child reader is the end of the story, despite that the whole story contains many scary and effective events but the end decides what remains in the child's mind. For that most Gothic stories ends

with an optimistic tone even Lemony Snicket's series somehow ends with a slight hope since the three children formed a new family together. Nevertheless, Snicket states from the very beginning that the story of the three children has no happy ending.

Finally, When Gothic integrates with Comic. It becomes no more a genre for terrifying; however, it becomes a genre of lessons and psycho development. Thus, this combination has produced a genre full of hidden and unlocked messages created skillfully for children.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of Lemony Snicket's *The Bad Beginning* from *A Series of Unfortunate Events,* the researcher has tried to show how and in what way children's literature consists of Gothic elements. Thus, the analysis started with the cover and the back of the book. it shows that the cover of *The Bad Beginning* is the door to Lemony Snicket's Gothic world since the cover illustrates the miserable situation of the three children and it indicates that the bad beginning of children will be followed by more unfortunate events. Moreover; the combination between the back of the cover and the quote by Lemony Snicket "Please read something else" raises the curiosity in the reader to discover what is inside this book.

In addition, this chapter demonstrates that the Gothic elements most time cooperating. Thus, the cover of the book is followed by different narrative techniques to put more emphasis on the Gothic. First of all; the regular warning of Snicket about how this story is Gothic, also his unique style in interpreting the events by several comments about what might happen. Yet, most importantly is Snicket's simple language that directed to the children and the various explanations of the difficult words. Snicket uses the language of horror skillfully also his unreliable narration is a great narrative technique, since he is the author, the narration, and a character in the story. All these narrative techniques serve to develop a coherent plot with different Gothic devices.

Thus, Gothic is highly traced in the flow of the events. From the first event, Snicket shows mystery also continues to appear throughout the story, for example of mystery is the same image that appears in every part of Count Olaf's house. Snicket also uses terror to support this mystery for example he shows how the villain is saying terrifying things to the children and mistreat them. In addition to that he makes a useful presence of an uncanny element, the first

event of uncanny is the unreasonable death of the children's parents then it follows by the strange figure that appears on the beach and more other events. An important element that support the Gothic devices in the plot is the isolation of the protagonists, the three children are orphans as result they will be alone in the whole novel without any emotional support.

All events of the story take place in an undefined place; the city is not mentioned as well as the country. Yet, there are some signs that indicate the twentieth century, however, there are some things that indicate to the past and that one of the Gothic traditions is to set a story in the past. Another Gothic element in the setting is the house of the villain, it is describing with the most terrifying words. Hence, it looks so scary outside and inside. Moreover; the setting of the character shows his psychological dimension in this regard Count Olaf has all the Gothic elements of traditional villain; He is greedy, scary, evil, and cruel.

The different Gothic elements used by Snicket, in a way or another, it aimed at children. Thus, Snicket was able to reduce the Gothic tension on the child reader; He uses a unique style of parody and humor in writing and presenting the evil characters in the story. Snicket blends Gothic with Comic forms to mitigate its effect on the child reader, at the same time maintaining the conventions of children's literature. As a result, the genre that depicts the most terrifying things changed his tension to be a positive effect on the child reader.

General conclusion

Post-modern authors tend to merge different genres in their literature to represent the ambiguity of the real world, each author depicts his view of the world in his fiction, and Daniel Handler is one of them. Handler chose to portray his Gothic own view of the world as he states: "the way that the stories go in Snicket's books is just the way stories naturally go to me, they are full of misery end up being hilarious" (in Robinson 18).

Tracing Gothic in children's literature is a difficult task to fulfill; it demands a long bibliographic journey. However, after a journey through the world created by Daniel Handler, it can be concluded that Daniel's work *The Bad Beginning* from *A Series of Unfortunate Events* deserved the title of being one of the best icons of Gothic in children's literature. While dark fiction for young readers remains a debatable issue among adult readers, Handler under the pen name Lemony Snicket created a perfect Gothic world in his novel *The Bad Beginning* with different visions of childhood. Snicket opened his novel with a sad tone, but he regally warns the readers that the story he narrates is an unusual one and that Baudelaire's children will suffer from a series of unfortunate events. Snicket by using Gothic in his novel leaves us with the idea of if one thing did not happen; it means the death of children, none of the following unfortunate events would happen.

Moreover; his choice to do not hide the existence of evil especially in children's literature is something bold since it's a confusing thing to the child. Despite the pessimistic tone, and the different Gothic elements Handler's novel remains conforming to the conventions of children's literature since it shows how the children could be brave, responsible, and most importantly they have values and learned lessons for life. Thus, children's literature conventions and Gothic in

this novel are more inextricably. Moreover; the fusion of postmodern narrative devices and Gothic in Snicket's novel produced a world of make-believe in which the characters are at the center of his narrative, on the one hand, the whole novel has represented a mirror to the tragedy of those children who lost their parents.

And last and not least, in close view to the Gothic parameters in the case study *The Bad Beginning,* the study found that Gothic elements are pervasive in all parts of the story. Starting with the cover and passing to the narrative technique, setting and plot and even in the main character Count Olaf. From the beginning till the end Snicket's novel far away from the happy end, it is somehow dark, Count Olaf indeed dies and the Orphans survive, but the three Baudelaire have to get into the harsh world and they cannot run from it anymore. It is not particularly a winning of good over evil. *The Bad Beginning* is full of the Gothic atmosphere; probably because Gothic one of the most appropriate modes to represent the darkness of childhood and child abuse. The Gothic that represents very terrible and dark events is very adequate to allow children's authors to deal with themes that depict very serious problems about childhood.

Through this journey in Lemony Snicket's novel, the study has tried to answer the fundamental question of this thesis: how Handler was able to reduce the effects of Gothic on the child reader? Thus, this paper found that Snicket's unique style in blending Gothic with Comedy is what mitigates the Gothic effects. Hence, the existence of Comic Gothic in a work of children's literature is beneficial for the devolvement of the genre as well.

Gothicism in children's literature, in addition to, being a source of entertainment, can produce a didactic purpose if it is blended with Comedy. Furthermore; Comic Gothic aims to

reach the unexpressed and the deepest fears of the children by providing the emotional training that children need. And what makes Comic Gothic an effective teaching tool for children its ability in conquering their fears and establishing their independence.

What is more, Gothic often is not considered a childish genre due to its terrifying elements although Snicket has been able to make this genre somehow childish through integrating it with humor to serve children's literature purpose and to indicate what meant to be taken seriously and what is not, and the most important is this combination mitigates the Gothic effects on the child reader and even it changed them to the positive ones. Thus, Comic Gothic is so effective in helping children to deal with their anxieties.

Finally, darkness is necessary, however, like all medicine it must not skip the dose allowed. Parents must be responsible for what their children read; while many parents might wish to protect their children from scary stories and negative feelings. Yet, it is this introduction to fears that helps to guide children toward repairing those annoying emotions within themselves.

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Résumé

La présent étude vise a retracer les éléments narratifs gothiques tels qu'ils appariassent dans la

fiction pour les enfants. En outre, il examine le rôle de la combinaison de la littérature pour les

enfants avec la gothique. Cette thèse présente un exemple de la littérature post- moderne qui

témoigne de cette tendance ; le premier roman *The Bad Beginning* d'une série intitulée *A Series

of Unfortunate* Events de Daniel Handler, le roman de Daniel Handler a été publie en 1999.

L'étude abordera le roman de Snicket d'un point de vue analytique en plus de s'appuyer sur la

théorie du Postmodernisme. La présente étude constate que les éléments gothiques sont

incorporés dans le roman avec sont soin pour s'adapter à l'enfant lecteur. Handler a fourni un

large éventail de stratégies narratives qui intègrent le gothisme dans sa fiction. Ainsi ; il s'intègre

entre le comique et le gothique pour atténuer les effets du gothique sure l'enfant lecteur. En

outre ; cette intégration entre les éléments les plus terrifiants et la comédie contribue au

développement de la littérature pour enfants en tant que genre. Plus important encore, cette

combinaison aide à éclaire les effets positifs sur l'enfant lecture. à la suite ; cette étude constate

que cette fusion fournit un stimulus sain pour l'enfant lecteur. De plus, cette intégration aide

.l'enfant à apprendre à gérer les conflits intra personnels et interpersonnels

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في كيفية دمج العناصر القوطية في الأدب المخصص للأطفال ، بالإضافة إلى ذلك هذه الدراسة تسلط الضوء على تأثير مزج العناصر القوطية في الأدب الموجه للأطفال على الطفل القارئ وكذلك تحدد دور هذا المزج. هذه الدراسة تقدم مثال من أدب ما بعد الحداثة وقد تم رصد موضوع الدراسة في الرواية الأولى من **سلسلة أحداث مؤسفة** للكاتب دانيال هاندلر بعنوان **البداية السيئة** التي تم نشرها في 1999. هذه الدراسة تجد أن العناصر القوطية ممزوجة بعناية في الرواية المدروسة. علاوة على ذلك فان الكاتب قام بإضافة العناصر الكوميدية لتخفيف من حدة تأثير العناصر القوطية. هذا التداخل بين العناصر القوطية و العناصر الكوميدية ساعد في تطور الأدب الموجه للأطفال كنوع أدبي قائم بحد ذاته. كما أن هذا التداخل يمنح محفز صحي للطفل القارئ وكذلك يساعد الطفل على معالجة مشاكله الشخصية و مخاوفه الداخلية بطريقة هزلية.